

Proposal Reviews

#5: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

American River Conservancy

Initial Selection Panel Review

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review

Land Acquisition

Delta Regional Review

External Scientific Review

#1

#2

#3

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding

Environmental Compliance

Budget

Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

Explanation of Recommendation Categories: Fund

- **As Is** (a proposal recommended for funding as proposed)
- **In Part** (a proposal for which partial funding is recommended for selected project phases or components)
- **With Conditions** (a proposal for which funds are recommended if the applicant contractually agrees to meet the specified conditions)

Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan (a proposal addressing a high priority action that requires some revision followed by additional review prior to being recommended for funding)

Not Recommended (a proposal not currently recommended for funding-after revision may be considered in the future)

Note on "Amount":

For proposals recommended as Fund As Is, Fund In Part or Fund With Conditions, the dollar amount is the amount recommended by the Selection Panel.

For proposals recommended as Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan, the dollar amount is the amount requested by the applicant(s).

Fund	
As Is	X
In Part	-
With Conditions	-
Consider as Directed Action	-
Not Recommended	-

Amount: **\$2,000,000.**

Conditions, if any, of approval (if there are no conditions, please put "None"):

None.

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

The Selection Panel recommends funding this proposal to protect habitat for red-legged and yellow-legged frogs, Northwestern pond turtle, California spotted owl and Northern goshawk. The applicant has identified willing sellers, and is encouraged to seek support from local governments because the identified parcels are zoned low density residential. The property is not prime or unique agricultural land and is not currently in agricultural use. This acquisition is time sensitive because of residential development and vineyard expansion.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review Form

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Superior: outstanding in all respects;

Above Average: Quality proposal, medium or high regional value, and no significant administrative concerns;

Adequate: No serious deficiencies, no significant regional impediments, and no significant administrative concerns;

Not Recommended: Serious deficiencies, significant regional impediments or significant administrative concerns.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
XSuperior	The clear goals, selection of high priority land parcels, plan to transfer the land to resource agencies, and the substantial cost sharing make this an excellent proposal.
-Above average	
-Adequate	
-Not recommended	

1. **Goals and Justification.** Does the proposal present a clear statement of goals, objectives and hypotheses? Does the proposal present a clear justification and conceptual model for the project?

The reviewers concurred that the goals and objective of the project were clearly stated. The proposal is to acquire 3000 acres of habitat in the Cosumnes river watershed. It is important since currently only 10% of the land is publicly owned and urban development and vineyard expansion is threatening what is now generally pristine habitat. This project will purchase many small parcels, many of which are contiguous and extend on both sides of the streams. The project is timely since the pressure for development and land prices both increase. The objectives are clearly expressed in terms of acres, but less clearly in terms of water rights. The proposal does not address how the acquisitions will affect flow levels, however the reviewers did not see this omission a serious fault.

2. **Likelihood of Success (Approach, Feasibility, Capabilities and Performance Measures).** Is the project likely to succeed based on the approach, feasibility and project team capabilities? Are the proposed performance measures adequate for measuring the project's success?

The approach in identifying a considerable number of potential acquisitions is good in that negotiations between owners may result in lower purchase prices. The planning groups included considerable governmental and NGO agencies, however individuals and the active participants were not indicated. The parcels identified cover well the river reaches, a few site were upslope and may not directly impact the River.

The proposal performance measure is the acreage targets. Additional measures could include measures that show relationship between acquisitions and easement back to larger goals related to species and habitat. ARC has a good track record.

The project having acquired 2/3 of the funding is highly feasible and success is highly likely.

3. **Outcomes and Products.** Will the project advance the state of scientific knowledge in general and/or make an important contribution to the state of knowledge of the Bay-Delta Watershed? For restoration proposals, is the project likely to contribute to ecosystem restoration or species recoveries in a significant way? Will the project produce products useful to decision-makers and scientists?

The product is the land purchases, which will be transferred to BLM and Dept. of Fish and Game for joint management. Monitoring will be conduct by BLM and DFG. Since development in this habitat will be stopped, or significantly reduced, the response of the habitats populations, such as fish and amphibians, to future climate variations may be useful when compared to the variations in other habitats that experience similar climate changes plus increased stress from development. In short, the Cosumnes River may be a useful reference habitat to compare others against.

4. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The cost benefits are excellent. CALFED would contribute 1/3 of the total amount BLM and the Packard Foundation will each provide 1/3. Excellent benefit to cost ratio.

5. **Regional Review.** How did the regional panel(s) rank the proposal (High, Medium, Low)? Did the regional panel(s) identify significant benefits (regional priorities, linkages with other activities, local involvement) or impediments (local constraints, conflicts with other activities, lack of local involvement) to this proposal? What were they?

Regional review ranking is high. The project has a high probability of success. The project supports recovery of several species. Properties identified are classified as Priority 1 acquisitions in the Conceptual Area Acquisition Plan. The project is linked with public lands held by CDFG and BLM. Linkage to other restoration efforts is ensured by participation in the Upper Consumnes River Basin Conservation partnership which include the applicant (American Rover Conservancy), CDFG, BLM, UC-Davis, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Amador Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy.

6. **Administrative Review.** Were there significant concerns about the proposal with regard to the prior performance, environmental compliance and budget administrative reviews? What were they?

American Rivers has done an excellent job in negotiating acquisitions in the Pine Hill Ecological Reserve.

Miscellaneous comments:

Land Acquisition:

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

1. Is the site's ecological importance documented in the proposal?

XYes -No

If yes, please import relevant text and citations here:

The Upper Cosumnes River Basin Conservation Project is one part of a landscape-scale endeavor to preserve this last free-flowing river system through the acquisition of critical properties fronting the main, north and middle Forks of the upper Cosumnes River. Approximately 3,000 acres of exceptional riparian and upslope habitat would be acquired in fee and transferred to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State Department of Fish and Game (SDFG) for joint management. The project area extends from the Sacramento-El Dorado County line to its headwaters at approximately the 7,200 foot elevation.

The Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP, 1996) recognizes the project area as supporting a wide variety of plant and animal communities, significant areas where native fishes are still present, and habitats for endemic birds and aquatic insects. The California River Assessment (CARA) also ranks several segments of the upper Cosumnes River within the project area as having substantial or outstanding riparian and aquatic resource conditions. Both the north and middle Forks of the Cosumnes River are listed as candidates for Wild and Scenic River status. In addition, the project area provides important habitat for numerous species of concern. The western portions of the project area contain spawning gravels for the San Joaquin fall run Chinook salmon, a candidate species for possible addition to the lists of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended. A portion of the project area, located on the north and middle forks of the Cosumnes River, is identified as critical habitat for the California red-legged frog within the draft recovery plan issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS May, 2000). The California red-legged frog is listed as "threatened" under the ESA. The far eastern edge of the project area provides habitat for the Mountain yellow-legged frog, a species petitioned as "endangered" under the ESA. Upper foothill and lower montane elevations of the project area contain considerable habitat for the California spotted owl, a species petitioned as "threatened" under the ESA. A number of other sensitive wildlife species occur within the project area including Northern goshawk, Foothill yellow-legged frog, and Northwestern pond turtle, all three of which are National Forest Sensitive Species (NFSS) and California Species of Special Concern (CSSC). The foothill regions of the Upper Cosumnes River capture a range of habitats that were once extensive throughout the Sierra Nevada but which are now reduced or under threat as a result of urbanization, mining, grazing, agricultural development and logging. The foothill elevations of the watershed provide a significant ecological linkage between the protected natural areas of the upper floodplain (Cosumnes River Preserve) and the large tracts of federal lands within the Eldorado National Forest, including areas designated to protect old forests and important aquatic habitats as identified within the USFS Sierra Nevada Forest Plan

Amendment (the Framework, January 2001).

The project area supports numerous species of concern associated with riparian and Late Successional Old Growth (LSOG) forest habitat. The applicant has used the California Wildlife Habitat Relations System (CWHR, California Dept. of Fish and Game, 1999) to assess the number and kinds of species that occur or have the potential to occur within the project area. Key wildlife species of concern that occur and potentially occur in the project area include San Joaquin fall run Chinook salmon, California red-legged frog, Foothill yellow-legged frog, Mountain yellow-legged frog, Northwestern pond turtle, Northern goshawk, and California spotted owl...:

Amphibians: The California red-legged frog (CRLF) is listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Although there have been no recent sightings within the project area, there are two historical sightings of record within the Upper Cosumnes River Basin and this amphibian has an established reproductive population in the Weber Creek drainage immediately north and adjacent to the project area. Because of the proximity of occupied CRLF habitat and the presence of potential habitat, portions of the North and Middle Forks of the Cosumnes have been designated as critical habitat for the California red-legged frog. Recent sightings of CRLF in the Sierra Nevada are limited to the Weber Creek drainage and one other watershed in Plumas County (US Fish and Wildlife Service 2000). As stated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Recovery Plan for the California Red Legged Frog", dated October 24, 2000: ... "protection of existing metapopulations will occur through preservation (e.g. fee title acquisition, conservation easements, conservation agreements) and management of occupied drainages and core recovery areas."

Foothill yellow-legged frogs have been sighted in the upper portions of this emphasis area in Sly Park Creek, Camp Creek south of Fleming Meadow, and Fleming Meadow. The foothill yellow-legged frog prefers open canopy streams and reproduces in stream riffles with egg masses attached to fist-sized cobbles. Foothill yellow-legged frogs have been observed in the upper portions of the north and middle forks of the Cosumnes River in Camp Creek and Sopiago Creek. Mountain yellow-legged frog is known to exist in the project area in Camp Creek, Anderson Canyon Creek and Leek Springs.

As with elsewhere in the Sierra Nevada, ... factors associated with the decline of native ranid frog populations ... include degradation and loss of habitat through timber harvesting, mining, agriculture and urbanization; water diversions and water impoundments; introduced predators, particularly bullfrogs and non-native predatory fishes; and the drift of agricultural chemicals from the Central Valley (Jennings, 1996). This project will acquire and protect 3,000 acres of critical riparian habitat, help prevent the above documented sources of degradation from occurring on these acquired lands and assist in recovery efforts.

Fisheries: The western edge of the project area provides spawning gravels for the late fall run Chinook salmon. The Nature Conservancy in partnership with the University of California, Davis, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Water Resources and other agencies are working to remove low-flow barriers on the Cosumnes immediately downstream of the project area to improve spawning access. These agencies are supportive of this proposed project for the purpose of preserving current instream flows and preventing additional development and water diversions that would further impact salmon passage. Otherwise, as recently as 1999, fish surveys in lower elevation portions of the north and middle forks of the Cosumnes River were dominated by Hardhead and Sacramento Sucker with a smaller component of roach (Moyle and Whitener, unpublished data). Upper elevation reaches of the north and middle forks of the Cosumnes River are dominated by rainbow trout with smaller numbers of brown and brook trout.

On August 21, 2001, the State Department of Fish and Game (SDFG) approved and adopted an extensive Conceptual Area Acquisition Plan (CAPP) proposing the acquisition of 29,059 acres within 310 parcels and under 137 ownerships to protect the exceptional riparian and upslope habitat within the Upper Cosumnes River Basin. The 3,000 acres proposed for acquisition under this CALFED grant application represents a portion of Priority #1 acquisitions identified under this approved and adopted CAPP. Within the past year, the SDFG has partnered with the American River Conservancy and the Packard Foundation to acquire a 1,178 acre conservation easement on the Garibaldi Ranch (elevation 600 ft) on the Main Fork Cosumnes and a 160 acre wet meadow at Leek Springs (elevation 7,200 ft.). A conservation easement over the 2,000 acre Ervin Ranch on the Main Fork (elevation 350 ft.) is also being undertaken the SDFG with assistance from ARC.

Adaptive management of the upper Cosumnes River Preserve will be an integral part of the overall Management Plan. As specified within recovery plans, there are many kinds of historical impacts to the species of concern highlighted within this proposal. Management options include the maintenance and increase of instream flows, the reduction of habitat fragmentation, the elimination and control of invasive species, monitoring instream water quality for point and non-point sources of pollutants and instituting a pollution control program....

Acquisitions will substantially increase protected areas for known occurrences of hardhead/squawfish, rainbow trout, and unusual assemblages of macroinvertebrates, including an ephemeral stream supporting a rare assemblage of stoneflies. Proposed acquisitions will protect portions of the North and Middle Fork Cosumnes River sub-basins identified as core recovery areas for the Redlegged frog within the draft recovery plan issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in May, 2000. The project will also support protection efforts for a number of sensitive species including Foothill yellow-legged frog, and Mountain yellow-legged frog and Western pond turtle. The acquisition of water rights associated with project lands will protect existing instream flows required for the passage of the San Joaquin fall run Chinook salmon.

2. Is the owner's willingness to sell the site documented in the proposal?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

178 different parcels within the project area are identified by the applicant as potential acquisitions. The applicant pledges that it will only select properties from this list which owners are willing to sell.

3. Is evidence of local government support for the purchase included in the proposal?

-Yes XNo

If yes, please explain:

The proposal states only that "all members of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors have been notified of this project and there is no know opposition."

4. Is the use proposed for the site after its purchase clearly consistent with the site's general plan designation and zoning?

-Yes XNo

If no, please explain:

The site is designated for medium to low density residential use in the county plan, and zoned for RE-10 (presumably residential estates, 1 unit per 10 acres). There is no information in the allocation about how the proposed publically owned nature preserve might conform to/conflict with County plans for rural residential use of surrounding lands.

5. Is the land mapped as prime farmland, farmland of statewide significance, unique farmland, or farmland of local importance?

-Yes XNo

If yes, please explain the classification:

Is the site under a Williamson Act contract?

-Yes XNo

Will use of the site change from agriculture after its purchase?

-Yes -No XNot Currently in Agriculture

6. Is this a time-sensitive acquisition opportunity, according to the proposal?

XYes -No

If yes, please import relevant text here:

Throughout the Sierra Nevada, ... natural communities have become highly fragmented as a result of more intense subdivision and parcelization than is found in any other life zones in the project area. The ecological problems associated with parcelization are outlined by Duane (1999) and include: reduced total habitat area through total direct habitat conversion; reduced habitat patch size and increased habitat fragmentation; isolation of habitat patches by roads, structures and fences; harassment of wildlife by domestic dogs and cats; biological pollution from nonnative vegetation alleles; and increased impervious surface and oil runoff. Only 10 percent of the properties within the foothill zone are publicly owned. Most of these public properties are distributed along the north and middle Forks of the Cosumnes River and are managed by the BLM. However, these properties provide only scattered protection of open space and habitats and the parcels are somewhat isolated providing few habitat linkages.

The urban expansion of the Sacramento area west into Cameron Park and beyond is quickly encroaching into the lower and middle reaches of the upper Cosumnes Basin. The predominant rural residential land use allows for the subdivision of parcels down to 10 acres in size. The El Dorado County General Plan allows for a significant decrease in the average size of residential parcels and an increase in the number of these parcels at build-out. Currently, there are about 2,900 parcels in the Rural Residential land use designation in the upper Cosumnes Basin. At build-out, the number of parcels could exceed 5,000 and result in an 80 percent increase in the

current number of parcels (ARC, Env. Assessment, December 2000).

In addition to parcelization and development, the ongoing threat of vineyard expansion continues. The foothill zone has the largest percentage of prime cropland and farmland of statewide importance in the project area. Agricultural development in the foothill zone is dedicated primarily to vineyards distributed throughout the Shenandoah Valley and the Fairplay-Mt. Aukum area. Vineyard expansion often comes at the expense of woodlands, chaparral and other plant communities. Additionally, vineyard management requires exclusion of wildlife in order to maximize grape production making the use of wildlife friendly practices difficult. Analysis conducted by the ARC suggests an additional 500 acres of vineyard expansion within the Shenandoah Valley and 200 acres within the Fairplay-Mt. Aukum area is possible within the next 7-10 years.

Other Comments:

A BLM letter endorsing the project is included in the application. Cost share of \$4 million from the WCB, BLM, Packard Foundation, + Nat'l Fish + Wildlife Foundation is anticipated.

Delta Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 5

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

Overall Ranking: -Low -Medium **XHigh**

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

Excellent project; excellent proposal.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

Project has a high probability of success. Applicant has previous acquisition experience in this watershed (e.g., Garibaldi Ranch, Leek Springs, Ervin Ranch), has identified a comprehensive list of potential acquisitions consistent with regional restoration plans and has already raised \$5,000,000 from other sources.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

XYes -No

How?

Project supports recovery efforts for several species of concern (e.g., yellow- and red-legged frogs, Northwestern pond turtle, California spotted owl, Northern goshawk) associated with riparian and Old Growth Forest habitat. It would also slightly augment stream flows, benefitting fall run Chinook salmon. Properties identified for potential acquisition in this proposal are classed as Priority 1 acquisitions in the Conceptual Area Acquisition Plan approved and adopted by the California Department of Fish and Game in August 2001.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

XYes -No

How?

Project compliments and extends regional planning efforts to protect wildlife resources. Proposed acquisitions link together and expand existing public lands held by the CDFG, BLM and National Forest Service. The 3,000 acres acquired under this project would be managed by CDFG and BLM. Linkage to other restoration efforts is ensured by participation in the Upper Cosumnes River Basin Conservation partnership which includes the applicant (American River Conservancy), CDFG, BLM, UC-Davis, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Amador Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

XYes -No

How?

Transactions are with willing local landowners for appraised fair market value as approved by the coordinating agency. Presumably, no environmental documentation or public scoping process is required.

Other Comments:

X

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **5**

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
X Excellent	The documentation of the site was excellent, containing sufficient technical information and readable maps and photographs. The strategy of negotiating with multiple sellers is good. It is a 2:1 match which turns a \$2,000,000 CALFED contribution into \$6,000,000.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The proposal is to acquire 3000 acres of habitat in the Cosumnes river watershed. It seems important since currently only 10% of the land is publicly owned and urban development and vineyard expansion is threatening what is now generally pristine habitat. This project will purchase many small parcels, many of which are contiguous and extend on both sides of the streams. The project is timely since the pressure for development and land prices both increase

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The proposal seems justified, the areas are described in detail, current and historical fish runs plus other species of concern are identified, including source references. Estimates of expected urban and vineyard expansion in the region is identified, illustrating the value of securing the land and this time.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The approach in identifying a large number of potential acquisitions is good in that negotiations between owners may result in lower purchase prices. The planning groups included considerable governmental and NGO agencies, however individuals and the active participants were not noted.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The project is feasible and appears of appropriate scale. Most of the proposed acquisitions are along the river, fewer numbers are in upland slopes. Significant matching funds have been secured.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

Performance measure is the purchase. Not noted however, but of value, would be a measure of the success of negotiations, such as whether purchases were above or below the asking price. An alternative measure could be the fraction of the identified parcels acquired

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

The produce is the land purchases, which will be transferred to BLM and Dept. of Fish and Game for joint management. Monitoring will be conduct by BLM and DFG. Since development in this habitat will be stopped, or significantly reduced, the response of the habitats populations, such as fish and amphibians, to future external climate variations may be useful when compared to the variations in other habitats that experience similar climate changes plus increases stress from development. The in separating the impact of external climatic factors form development factors in non pristine areas. In short, the Cosumnes River may be a useful reference habitat to compare others against.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The two principles seem qualified. The Executive director has considerable experience in real-estate and has dealt with similar large scale acquisitions for environmental restoration.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The cost benefits are excellent. CALFED would contribute 1/3 of the total amount BLM and the Packard Foundation will each provide 1/3.

Miscellaneous comments:

This was the best land purchase proposal I reviewed.

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **5**

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
X Excellent	This project would secure riparian areas dominated by private land in the critical foothill zone and surrounding the otherwise high-quality status of the Cosumnes River. Its important to future protection and management as well as preserving the reference status of this river.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The goals are straightforward and completely consistent with project plans for land acquisition.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

This project is not a study and will either acquire land or conservation easements primarily in the critical foothill/lower pine zone along this important river. The proposal documents that such acquisition will reduce future disturbance to riparian areas and reduce the impact

of water use from development. There is substantial leverage of funds from this project.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The proponents have conducted a thorough and collaborative analysis of key parcels for priority acquisition. The lands mostly abut streams and are positioned in the larger area dominated by private land ownership. New information will not be produced from this project but it will advance the goals of CalFed and improve the future likelihood that the river will remain a reference of high quality habitat.

There is some question whether land acquisition will change the water rights or reallocation of stored water in the federally managed reservoir. The buffer potential of riparian acquisition is significant even if upland areas eventually are developed. Inclusion of isolated parcels within the National Forest, even though riparian, seem outside the prime objective of securing lands primarily surrounded by private land in the foothill region.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The logic is clear about how parcels will be acquired as well as fall back positions if price exceeds a threshold. Based on experience of the group and related agencies, the track record for acquiring the proposed lands seems feasible.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

As noted in the proposal, the project performance will rest with the success of acquiring the land and easements in the priority areas that have been identified. They expect at least 95% success in a short time after funding. Proponents seem confident based on past success that they can accomplish purchase as planned.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

The land to be acquired is the sole product of the project and these are critical to protecting future conditions along riparian areas. These are among the most sensitive to future development and would be important habitat and buffers even if future acquisitions beyond the riparian zone are limited.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The proponents have an established track record for this kind of project and are familiar with the region. They demonstrate a logical and technically competent basis for evaluating and prioritizing the lands needing immediate protection.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The cost for the land is shared by other collaborators which makes the benefits relatively large versus the cost to CalFed.

Miscellaneous comments:

External Scientific: #3

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

☒Correct

☐Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

I have worked with Alan Ehrgott on several El Dorado County committees (Oak Woodland as well as the Plant and Wildlife Technical Advisory Committee). I have discussed approaches to conserving the Cosumnes River basin with Alan on many occasions, having done preliminary assessment work on the basin when I worked at CDF/FRAP. I was one of several advisors to ARC environmental assessment of the Cosumnes basin. I am a dues-paying but not very active member of the Conservancy. I live in the area and would probably benefit from the project in terms of quality of life. Nonetheless, I view reviewing this project as a challenge to demonstrate impartiality!

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	I'd like to say nearly excellent!. The proposal doesn't explain the rationale between the proximate target of 3,000 acres and the larger CAPP extent of 29,000. I believe that such a rationale exists in the strategic plan but that isn't included in the proposal package. The causal linkage to flows is not as strong as I would like to see. Finally, I think the proposal would benefit from a monitoring program, but I can imagine that the proponent would feel that a monitoring program is premature (they are trying to get the land first, and I certainly agree that such acquisitions are justified).
XGood	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The goals are clearly stated: conservation of one of the few free-flowing rivers on the western slope and a whole host of associated values (Table 4.1) through fee-title acquisition and conservation easements to counter threats of residential development and vineyard expansion.

The objectives are expressed clearly in acreage terms and less clearly in terms of water rights and maintenance of flow regimes.

The concept is important, not just for the RT&E species issues (red-legged frog, etc.) but also for the larger landscape-scale phenomena such as natural flows. It is timely in that the issues of land use and water supply remain chronic and un-solved in El Dorado County, such that protection of the biological values represented in the Cosumnes are still at risk and unlikely to be protected via any other policy mechanism.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The project is justified on the basis of the values at risk (RT&E species, habitats, linkages and hydrologic variations) and the likely threats of residential development and vineyard expansion. The project has behind it both a separate environmental assessment, a strategic plan which explains the ranking of the different emphasis areas, and an approved CAPP.

The proposed mechanisms of acquisition and transfer to agencies, and management of conservation easements by local land trusts are reasonable methods for protecting the values.

What remains unclear is why the project picked 1000 acres of fee-title and 2000 acres of conservation easement, out of a total in the CAPP of 29,000 acres. Why a total of 3,000 acres, and why the split 1:2? On one hand, one could assume that a) any movement toward the CAPP goal is an unalloyed good, and therefore b) any target amount(s) of land or funds, while arbitrary, is nonetheless justifiable and c) one must in fact put money on the table before one can determine which parcels are actually available. On the other one does wonders if the order by which one approaches the overall goal (i.e. should the 1000 acres of acquisition all be contiguous in order to maximize impact?) might make a difference

The proposal is also rather vague, or maybe just unconvincing, regarding the way in which land purchases will affect water flows. The argument is that that development foregone reduces water withdrawn from the system, either directly from the stream or through the water table. However, I'm fairly sure that current appropriative water rights have a much larger impact on the system than wells or household diversions. Thus, while the project will do no harm and probably some good regarding flows, it does not address very well the larger influences driving the water regime.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The approach is well-thought and appropriate. The environmental assessment, leading to a strategic plan and the partnerships with land management agencies and land trusts on both planning and implementation provide a sound basis for implementation.

The proposal mentions on-going development of a Conservation Plan for the basin but places that explicitly outside the scope of the current project. While expedient, I would have preferred to see the inclusion of support for on-going monitoring and adaptive management in this proposal even if it increased the amount.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The acquisition/easement approach is well-documented (i.e. the set of target parcels is included) and technically feasible. Past experience in the area indicates that it can work. The proposal is explicit that it represents a first step in a much larger effort.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The proposal explicitly sets out acreage targets. The proposal lacks measures that would show the relationship between the acquisition and easement back to the larger goals of RT&E species, habitat linkages, etc. These arguments may be shown in the CAPP which covers the entire project (~29,000 acres), not just this first step.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

The proposal's outcomes of acquisitions and easements are clearly valuable.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The track record of ARC is executing these projects is well-documented and extremely good. The coalition of partners in both funding and implementation makes this project even more likely to succeed.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Yes

Miscellaneous comments:

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding:

New Proposal Number: 5

New Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

1. Prior CALFED project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*
2. Prior CVPIA project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

#14-48-11420-97J-231 Pine Hill Ecological Reserve acquisition - Cameron Park Unit 1997, 1998

3. Have negotiations about contracts or contract amendments with this applicant proceeded smoothly, without persistent difficulties related to standard contract terms and conditions?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any difficulties:

4. Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

5. Is the applicant's progress towards these project(s)' milestones and outcomes to date satisfactory?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

6. Is the applicant's reporting, records keeping, and financial management of these projects satisfactory?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

7. Will the project(s) be ready for next phase funding in 2002, based on its current progress and expenditure rates?

-Yes -No ☒N/A

If no, please explain:

ARC currently actively working with landowners to seek willing sellers. Status of these negotiations is unknown.(application simply states they are ongoing). ARCs goal of acquiring 3000 acres this calendar year may be too lofty based upon the difficulty of reaching acceptable acquisition terms that is often inherent in these types of projects. Recommending how many willing sellers (and the value of their land) have been identified to date.

Other Comments:

The American River Conservancy has done an excellent job in negotiating acquisitions towards the Pine Hill Ecological Reserve in El Dorado County, although they often take longer than anticipated to reach acceptable acquisition terms.

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

1. Are the legal or regulatory issues that affect the proposal identified adequately in the proposal?

-Yes ☒No

If no, please explain:

The land use change will likely trigger CEQA, although the project should qualify for a Categorical Exemption (Class 13). The checklist and explanatory text are contradictory (one states no zoning change, the other states that there will be a change). The land use change may require a change in general plan or other local agency permission. If the project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under CEQA, it may also qualify for a Categorical Exclusion under NEPA (rather than an EIS, as stated in the proposal).

2. Does the project's timeline and budget reflect adequate planning to address legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal?

-Yes ☒No

If no, please explain:

No time or money has been budgeted for filing the Categorical Exemption/Exclusion or any other environmental documentation.

3. Do the legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal significantly impair the project's feasibility?

-Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Acquisition is feasible, but in order to complete the land use change project proponents must be sure they are complying with CEQA and any local planning regulations. This may require some budget adjustment.

Other Comments:

Budget:

Proposal Number: 5

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Upper Cosumnes River Watershed Conservation Project

1. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each year of requested support?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

2. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each task identified?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Does the proposal clearly state the type of expenses encompassed in indirect rates or overhead costs?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

5. Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary?

XYes -No

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimbursed by cost share funds included in the budget summary).

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

-Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments: